

The Christian Visitor.

A FAMILY NEWSPAPER: DEVOTED TO RELIGIOUS AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

REV. I. E. BILL, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth Peace, good will toward Men." EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR
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Correspondence.

Spiritualism.

BY N. N.

Concluded.

When unintelligible phenomena occur, there is always a strong tendency in certain minds to refer them to supernatural causes. We need but to recall the Salem witchcraft excitement and other similar troubles to prove the truth of this statement. The principle still holds good. Mysterious rappings are heard in a house at Rochester. They are referred to supernatural agencies, an excitement arises, it spreads over the whole country. It grows into a strong belief. Tappings, writings, trances, and apparitions grow on to the original rappings, and soon from the assembled mass bursts forth a great religious system. Thousands receive it as a new revelation, and prophecy its uninterrupted growth to final supremacy, still *magna est veritas et prevalebit*. Time works strange changes with human creeds and doctrines. We look back upon similar excitements and see how rapidly they have subsided. Time invariably weakens or destroys the belief, even though it should not explain the cause. Guided therefore by precedent, we confidently look for a speedy and rapid decline of this new faith, which has in it so little to really satisfy the yearnings of an exalted soul. Still we may not find for a long period a solution of the problems embodied in it. But though these phenomena should remain forever wholly unexplained, and the mysterious action of mind on mind be forever hidden from mortal sense, we should still refuse to look for the solution to the spirit world, so long as we can find any strong reasons for believing that the origin of all this lies in natural and physical causes.

In the present condition of our knowledge of the human mind, and its modes of action it is of course difficult to state clearly the real nature of a system like Spiritualism, which has so much to do with mental operations; it is also impossible to find for ourselves or for others the actual truth with regard to it. After all however the darkness of the subject does not prevent us from seeing that Spiritualism can be referred to any other than supernatural causes, and is neither more nor less than a collection of all the floating phenomena of the day springing from electricity, nervous influences, clairvoyance, mesmerism, somnambulism, &c. To show this is our present aim.

There is no doubt that mind has a strange influence upon mind under certain circumstances. We have seen a man sit at one end of the room and by the power of his will influence another to do a certain act. Every one is familiar with the fact that when one person looks at another for any length of time, the other will almost invariably look back again. These and many instances familiar to the student of Psychology, show that even where people are separated from one another, one mind has an influence on another. To what extent this may be carried, no one can tell.

But if this be so when people are separated, much more so is it the case when they are in actual contact. Then the electricity, which exists in all animals, together with the mysterious nervous principle, become channels of intercommunication and influence between mind and mind. Then the will of one can rush to rest the physical nature of another, and subdue his mental faculties, and in some cases it seems as though the knowledge and thoughts of one became the property of the other. This could be illustrated by many a familiar experiment in animal magnetism, which certainly is not caused by supernatural influences.

Mind also influences matter. It affects animal life through the nervous influence, and through magnetism, and through the same agencies it sometimes affects inorganic matter—stone, wood, and iron. All are familiar with the old experiment of the "key and book." Numerous instances on past and present times are at once a proof and illustration of this power, while above all, the experiments of the Spiritualists with tables and articles of furniture, far from being a proof of spiritual intercourse, only show the extent of this influence. That it does not entirely depend on supernatural agencies, they themselves acknowledge. They make these spirit tables out of that kind of material which is the best electrical conductor, they use insulators, and other similar contrivances, they speak often in the language of the electrician. If they would but substitute the minds of those present, for spirits of the dead, their creed would be simpler and more consistent with the dictates of sound reason.

In addition to this we know that in certain diseases some men perform the most wonderful actions. In certain abnormal states induced by sickness the faculties of the mind seem to be marvellously strengthened.—Reason, or memory, or imagination will be quickened to a wonderful degree and shine in transcendent brightness.

Bearing these premises in mind we can go forward to consider the different facts in spiritualism, and endeavour to discuss their nature.

Rappings.—The experiments of the spiritualists themselves, and of many others who were well qualified, to investigate have resulted in establishing the belief that it is caused by the meeting of two currents of positive and nega-

tive electricity. The rap is the report caused by the meeting. The circle is formed around the table and they sit still with joined hands; or a single person sits with both hands upon the wood. In either case there is probably a galvanic current formed. The table becomes highly charged with the fluid and these noises are the consequences. It is not as easy to say why it is that sensible answers are given to questions, and why these raps come in obedience to the questioner. It is believed however that the mind has some unknown power over the currents and can control the raps at will. If this be so, then we can see how it is that many questions are answered truthfully, and also how it is that there never is a disclosure of what is not known to some one in the room. The currents are controlled in this mysterious way, either by the medium directly, or through the medium by the questioner, and thus the enquirer is astonished at finding what he believes is only known to himself, rapped out upon a table through the power of a medium who never could have seen him before.

TIPPING.—By our own personal experience, and that of many acquaintances, we are convinced that this is caused by the pressure of the muscles made unconsciously by the medium. Where this is not the case it is believed to be caused by the same magnetic currents which produce the raps. The answers made by the tipping of the table are of the same kind as those made by the raps, and invariably express what is only known to some person present. The table is moved either by the volition of the medium directly, or by that of some one in the company exercised through the medium.

CLAIRVOYANCE.—The spiritualists have adopted clairvoyance and made it all their own. The higher mediums when in the proper state will talk as though they saw distinct objects. Their theory is that the body is for the time occupied by some spiritual being who looks at these objects which are described. Clairvoyants however have never made known any great discovery, nor have they ever described anything which has not already been known to themselves or to some one present. The most astonishing cases of clairvoyance are when the enquirer is told something which none but himself has ever known. This and all instances of clairvoyance have led to the conclusion that the mind of the clairvoyant is acted upon by some other mind present and obeys its influence. The spiritualists have made no improvements whatever on the old clairvoyance, and they are thrown into the state in the same way as the others—that is by mesmerism.

TRANCES.—Among our own friends while they have been under the power of certain nervous affections, we have seen as striking cases of trance as ever have been found among the spiritualists. The mind becomes developed in its power, its faculties are strengthened, the subject becomes ecstatic, enraptured, enthusiastic. Glorious visions crowd upon the imagination, the language is elevated and poetical. Still the ideas are old—there is nothing uttered but what has formerly been in the mind of the subject, and we feel that his own mind originated all that is said. The trance of the spiritualists is analogous to delirium, and before they arose, and out of the pale of their society, has been often produced by fever, hysteria, or nervous disease.

WRITINGS, &c.—These are supposed to be produced by the mind when suffering under a temporary loss of consciousness. Here nothing is ever produced but what has been known before to the medium, or to his influences. The universalist writes universalism; the infidel infidelity; the socialist socialism; the orthodox orthodoxy; a woman who like the stout lady has had her head burned by Swedenborg's writings and a limited acquaintance with science, will write and talk as has been described in a preceding paper. Pictures are only another form of writing, and so a very imaginative and semi-scientific person, like our stout lady, will draw representations of the inhabitants of the Pleiades, the Sun, and the Planets, which have only originated in her own diseased brain. Sometimes the ideas will not be subject to order, but will be put on paper, and we will see in the *spirit drawing*, the chaos, the confusion, and utter nonsense of the drawings of the lady of the house.

It must not be supposed that the higher productions are confined to the Spiritualists.—Cases exist as wonderful as any of theirs. There is an instance on record of a young lady, who, in a state of somnambulism, rose night after night, and unconsciously wrote a long story, and another of a young German, who, in the same state, rose at night, went to gaming rooms, and won large sums of money at play.

These freaks of the mind in the absence of consciousness can hardly be understood as yet, but from the nature of them, which corresponds always to the character of the performer, we know that no other than he himself performed them, and that no supernatural being came to take possession of his body.

As long as parallel cases give us reason to believe that the wonders of Spiritualism are produced by some natural cause, under certain undiscovered natural laws; and, as long as we see that minds have the mysterious power over one another and over matter; in short, as long as animal magnetism, or nervous influence, can be proved to be sufficient causes to which these phenomena may be referred, we utterly refuse to believe in the supernatural agency taught by Spiritual-

ism. Our belief in the human and natural origin of these wonders, is confirmed by the undeniable fact that they inform us of nothing new, except when they teach downright absurdities. Their serious and more sensible doctrines are drawn from facts which man has already discovered. When they go to the unknown, they at the same time grasp the ridiculous. What sensible man could believe the idle tales of the Pleiades, and the drivel about the inhabitants of the sun? Who, that is in the possession of his reason, would credit the tales they tell about the misshapen human monsters inhabiting the neighbouring planets, whose imagined character and nature are so unworthy of the Deity, and so worthy of an insane man? Who could listen to the turgid bombast of their boasted trances, and believe that the mediums were inspired, or spoke other than the ideas peculiar to their own minds? In the imaginative writings of a cultivated Christian like "Dick," we find something pleasant, we listen often with delight, and feel that many of his charming fancies are not unreasonable; but to the miserable twaddle of these Spiritualists we listen only with impatience, pity and scorn.

From such scenes and doctrines as those of Spiritualism, we turn back eagerly and with fresher interest than ever to the grand old teachings of the Bible. Here we can find doctrines which we may learn with reverence; prophecies which we may hear with awe; and psalms to which we may listen with devout adoration; knowing that these glorious truths, wondrous visions, and rapturous strains could have emanated only from Deity. We turn back to the teachings of our Bible, and see there the joy of our fathers; the glory of old patriarchs and prophets, the hope and firm reliance of saints and martyrs. To that Bible let us ever hold steadfast through all the storms of new and high sounding human doctrines, for through the power of its Divine author, this book, like the truth which it teaches, is great and will prevail.

For the Christian Visitor.

DEAR BRO. BILL.—According to a previous appointment the Quarterly Meeting commenced with the Church at Norton on March 25, at 7 o'clock, P. M. The assembled held a social meeting, profitable we believe, to all who were present. On Thursday at 10 o'clock, met for worship; a large number of waiting souls were present, who listened to a stirring discourse from Bro. J. A. Smith. The subject was the consequences of making light of the Gospel of Christ. Removed the evening meeting to Hampton Village, and at seven, Bro. Smith again preached to a large assembly, the glorious truths of the blessed Gospel—subject "a day of good tidings." The meeting was interesting to those present. At ten o'clock on Friday, assembled again at Norton for worship, a large number being present, who were addressed by the writer. Subject, "All things are God's by creation and preservation; Church his by right and redemption." At 3 P. M., Bro. J. Masters preached to a large number—subject, "The constraining love of Christ." It was delightful truly to see our father in the Gospel, standing as a witness for Christ; may he long be spared to be useful in "the world." In the evening of said day, at seven o'clock, Bro. Smith preached a deeply interesting and affecting discourse—subject, "The result of faithfully sowing the precious seed of truth." The ministering brethren who attended these meetings were: Elders J. Masters, J. A. Smith, G. Burns, D. Crandall and J. W. Goucher, Licentiate. After the close of the Friday evening meeting, the ministering brethren and brethren J. Pickle, W. Hay and C. Baxter, held a meeting of consultation respecting the propriety of holding a course of Quarterly Meetings with the Churches in the Counties of St. John and King's, at the commencement of which Bro. J. Masters was chosen Chairman, and Bro. J. W. Goucher, Secretary. After due consideration it was unitedly agreed that such a course of meetings would be productive of good to the several Churches with which they might be held, in stirring them up to new engagedness in the service of Christ. Hence it was Resolved:

1. That the Churches of the Counties of King's and St. John unite in holding a course of Quarterly Meetings.
 2. That any Church wanting the Quarterly Meeting shall be requested to send in its request.
 3. That the Churches of the two Counties be requested to send in to each Meeting statistics of the state of religion among them.
 4. That the next Quarterly Meeting be held with the second Upham Church in the Tabor Meeting House on the last Friday in June, commencing at 4 o'clock, P. M.
- In discussing and passing the above Resolutions the utmost harmony prevailed. In fact, throughout the whole meetings, Christians seemed united, and sinners deeply interested.

Yours, &c.,

J. W. GOUCHER.

Upham Vale, March 30, 1857.

Canada Correspondence.

MR. EDITOR.—I feel a desire to communicate a few thoughts that were interchanged between the Rev. Mr. Booker and myself while in the cars on the same day and sad accident transpired when he in returning in the same train in the evening was killed. I left Hamilton in the morning train for Bronte. Just as I was seated, the Rev. Mr. Booker got into the same car, he instantly recognis-

ed me, and we entered freely into conversation. After a while the Rev. Mr. Englis came in, to whom I was introduced by Mr. Booker. He went forward conversing about the different systems of philosophy that had died away, especially infidel philosophy, or systems that had been raised against the Bible. These human systems were all passing while the Bible remained, like the rock in the ocean, impervious to all the proud waves that dash against it. I mentioned the works of Volney to him, which reminded him of an English lady who tried the power of her logic on him when he was in poor health, but he showed her the fallacy of her reasoning from the principles she had gathered from Volney's writings. Being defeated by Mr. Booker, she wheeled and left him disappointed and displeased. Again he remarked that the ancients were in possession of more knowledge than the moderns were willing to admit. Their works and writings and specimens of distinguished art were proofs of their knowledge and skill. Those specimens that have been dug out of the ruins of ancient cities show great skill in the arts and sciences. Through a turn of the conversation, he spoke very solemnly and feelingly about death.—There we paused a few moments as though our minds were suddenly arrested by a peculiar sensation of awful solemnity. Then he related a circumstance of his life, when very near the borders of death. The doctor was holding his arm to bleed him when he became conscious, he said, "Doctor, what are you going to do to me?" "To bleed you," replied the doctor, "you were almost dead." "It is a pleasant thing to die," answered Mr. Booker, "when we have nothing to do but die." A deep and solemn sensation of death passed through both our minds, while a solemn pause ensued. He passed on to remark that the shortness of life is a subject of great importance. We both felt deeply the uncertainty of human life.

Ah! little did he or I think that before the closing rays of twilight were extinguished, his spirit would be ushered before the great God who gave it. When I heard the news of his death, I felt deeply grateful that my lie was spared a little longer to my dear family who are far away, while I could freely shed a parting tear to the memory of one whom I had loved so warmly for the short acquaintance I had with him. God comfort his dear family and friends.

JOHN ROWE.

The Late awful Railroad Catastrophe.

An unknown hand has sent us the "Morning Banner" of Hamilton, Canada West, describing the horrid scenes of this terrible event, and of the improvement thereof by the Ministers and Churches of the City. From this paper we furnish the following extracts:—

The intense interest taken in everything connected with the late calamity, surpasses anything of the kind we ever witnessed. All desire for the transaction of ordinary business in this City, seems to have been buried with the victims of the recent tragedy; the particulars and incidents, and miraculous escapes connected with that fearful plunge, is the theme of ceaseless discussion in every circle in the Province. The event has awakened the slumbering consciences of the most callous in our midst to a sense of life's uncertainty, and the innumerable dangers that surround us on every side. Men, ay and women, who have seldom given death a thought, and into whose minds the idea of an eternity, scarcely ever entered, have been aroused out of this torpor by the ghastly spectacle of mangled and bloated humanity, stiff in the grasp of death. But such is human weakness, that the events of the past few days, fearful though they have been, will soon be forgotten, and from the conduct of those who now mourn and weep, it will hardly be observable six months hence, that any extraordinary occurrence had taken place! The blanks that have been made in our social and domestic circles, will be filled up with other objects, and conversation about death, judgment, eternity and the uncertainty of life will be exchanged for discussions upon matters of business, politics, fashion and nonsense. This event is not without its moral to Railroad men, as well as to the public at large. The School of experience is most valuable, if its lessons are properly attended to. We are glad to observe such an evident determination on the part of the public; and also on that of the officials of the Great Western, to institute the most rigid examination into the causes which led to the late fearful disaster. The evidence adduced yesterday, except in few particulars, coincides with that taken on Saturday. There seems to be no doubt but the driver whistled "on brakes" before entering upon the bridge, which fact corroborates the theory that some thing was wrong with the locomotive. If the bridge will not be proved insecure, it will not be the fault of Mr. Richards and his Grand Trunk engineers.

Amongst the slain were two Ministers of the Gospel. Rev. A. Booker, a Baptist Minister of Hamilton, was one of these. His death is thus noticed:—

MEETING ON MONDAY NIGHT.—MONUMENT TO THE REV. A. BOOKER.

The most solemn and impressive meeting we have ever witnessed, and the largest ever assembled in the City of Hamilton, was held

ing them to repent; and others bedewed with tears of filial regret for the loss of a patriarch and sainted father. All these in a moment were plunged into the yawning gulph and amid one wild shriek, the immortal spirits, saved or lost, appear before the tribunal of the living God; they that died in Christ welcomed into life everlasting, they that died out of Christ, driven from the presence of God and of the Lamb.

11. The reason assigned for the injunction "In such an hour as ye know not," as God has concealed the time and the manner of our dissolution, but he has revealed the fact, and it may be easy to account for his concealing the approach of death from us.

1. It is that we may be always in readiness for the approach of death.

2. Because there is no reason to believe that our being apprized of the fact, would influence us any more than the word of the gospel, and the warnings of providence, with which God is daily plying us.

The Rev. Gentleman wound up his discourse by an appeal, 1st. to Christians, 2nd. to unbelievers—so here "the rod and the hand that holds it." In his closing remarks he urged upon all those in occupations, which necessarily exposed them to danger, to be continually searching for that grace, which alone enables a man to live to Christ, and to die in Christ, and in possession of which he cares not by what harbingers the last enemy may herald his coming—he can say "Come quickly, Lord Jesus."

In the evening of the day, a united concert for prayer was held in Knox's Church, specially with a view to improve the death of the Rev. Mr. Booker. At this meeting there were present; Rev. E. Ebbs, Congregational Minister, Rev. W. Ormiston, U. P. Minister, Rev. W. Stevenson, Primitive Methodist Minister, and Rev. Dr. Irvine, with their respective congregations. The whole of the above named gentlemen took part in the deeply solemn and affecting services of the evening, which consisted of psalmody, reading the scriptures, and confessional prayer.

From the Colonial Presbyterian.

A REHEARSAL.

It was certainly necessary for the "Visitor" to call to our recollection the passage regarding profane and old wives fables. Ours is nothing of that kind. Since the "Visitor" does not or will not understand reason, we spoke to him in a parable. Nor was it at all necessary to give the preceding hourly of the "Visitor" on the difference between baptism and circumcision. We beg to assure the "Visitor" that we understood the various points of difference before, and so did our Presbyterian readers; but that the dissimilarity between the two ordinances is any argument against the unity of God's church in Old and New Testament times, we have yet to learn, or that it is any reply to our position that since infants were in the church of old and have not since been expelled for any offences that we wot of, they are there still.

Before concluding what we have got to say on the point at present in dispute between the Visitor and ourselves, and passing on to the next point, viz., the mode of baptism, we will present to our readers what we believe to be the scheme of the whole. By this all will be able to discover wherein we agree, and wherein we differ.

Both parties are agreed that the baptism of adults who believe, is right, and in their case the same course is pursued by both—not to administer the sacrament of baptism until a public profession of faith is made. Portions of Scripture, therefore, proving the baptism of adults, cannot be advanced with any effect by either party against the other, as they prove equally on both sides. This being common ground must in consequence be abandoned since we are at one on the point. But through the whole of this controversy the Visitor has made an exceeding show of quotations from Scripture, proving what we do not deny, viz., that adults are required to make a public profession of faith previous to baptism. The example of the Jailor, the Eunuch, &c., prove clearly that adults are to profess faith before baptism—but they prove nothing against infants. The command is not given that infants are to believe and repent, and then, as was well observed by the "Visitor," in relation to infants not being permitted to starve since they are not commanded to work, neither are they debarred from baptism because they are not commanded to believe; and for a similar reason as was also admirably affirmed by the "Visitor," they are not excluded from Heaven for want of faith, because they are not commanded or required to believe.

But it is asserted by the Baptist that there is no express precept or example for the baptism of infants, and that they cannot believe and repent, and it is admitted by us that there is no express command or example that is by itself indisputable of their baptism. But neither is there anything against their baptism. We defy the "Visitor" to show a single precept, or to quote a single example that has the slightest bearing against the baptism of infants. And as the "Visitor" commenced with the offer of a reward, we will conclude with a similar offer. We engage to pay him a hundred pounds if he will furnish one text which clearly or directly proves that infants are not to be baptized. Nay, more, we will allow him to bring together, in the largest capitals, for which he seems to have a great fancy, all the passages which he thinks has any bearing on the subject, to prove the point, and we will still hold by our offer. But the truth is, he cannot show one single passage which has the slightest bearing against the admission of infants into the church. This offer we make advisedly, and defy him to the proof. Where is the command, thou shalt not baptize infants? Where the example or refusal to baptize them?

He has nothing, then, against the admission of infants into the church but the want of positive mention of their names as included in the commission, or the want of capacity to believe; but as incapacity to work is no argument for starvation of children, so neither is it against their baptism. They are not mentioned by name, though included in the general term nations, but neither are women mentioned as having a right to eat of the Lord's Supper—their right requiring to be established as the "Visitor" has done by inferential reasoning.

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